

# FARHAT HACHED

*Tunisian Labor Leader*  
*Patriot*  
*Martyr*

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NEW YORK JULY 1953

I am indebted to my friend Farhat Hached for having supported and worked for the formation of the Tunisian Office for National Liberation in New York. Together we took the first steps towards this goal. Before returning to Tunisia from America, Farhat Hached introduced me to the American trade union leaders who had invited him for talks in this country. On the 20th of April, 1952, Farhat Hached wrote a letter to the American trade union leaders belonging to the ICFTU, in which he asked them to extend to me the same support and interest that he had enjoyed. He also fixed upon me the responsibility to speak in the United States for those organizations which he himself had represented.

In dedicating this modest book to Farhat Hached I have tried to honor his memory. In trying to explain what he fought and died for, I hope to tie more closely the bonds of world labor to which Farhat Hached adhered. That, I feel, is what Farhat Hached himself would have wanted.

BAHI LADGHAM

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# Farhat Hached

1914-1952

*"There must not be either a cessation of activity, nor rest, because the one will signify death, the other feebleness and the passing by of life and its events, which themselves never stop nor rest."*

FARHAT HACHED AT THE UGTT'S  
THIRD NATIONAL CONGRESS, APRIL 1949.



FARHAT HACHED

WHEN Farhat Hached finally stopped working it was only because he was machine-gunned to death. Up to that time Farhat Hached had followed his own words all his life. With a quiet courage but no quietism of spirit, and with a sincerity and intelligence of purpose that never went beyond the active limits which a wholehearted acceptance of the democratic spirit and method imposed upon him, he worked for the Tunisian and the world labor movement.

The charge is sometimes brought against Farhat Hached that he went beyond the role and functions of a simple labor leader to meddle in politics. But Farhat Hached was not only fighting a simple employer for a definition of minimum wages and maximum hours. Farhat Hached was not faced alone with the relatively tangible and concrete issues of the right to strike, the layoff, yellow dog labor, the blacklist, intimidation and discrimination against union workers.

The strikebreakers he faced, and the strikebreakers Tunisian workers face today is the French protectorate regime, imposed on Tunisia for political reasons, to give aid to the big French companies and comfort to the French alien minority of 140,000 persons. Union meetings and normal trade union activities are considered as offenses against the security of the state.

In such circumstances, any worker in the New World, Old World, African or Asian World, would have to find new weapons, new ideas, to fight against such union-busting activities supported by all the arbitrary powers which a military state of siege law gives the employer.

When Farhat Hached wanted to bargain collectively, it wasn't a simple case of employer, employee and disinterested arbitrator. The third party in Tunisia is always the very

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interested Protectorate government. Necessarily, trade unionism for Farhat Hached became more than just sitting across the bargaining table from an employer. He had to build the bargaining table first. He had to build an adequate balance of power between the worker and the employer necessary before any successful bargaining can be concluded.

To think or write about Tunisia today, knowing the conditions that prevail there is to be overwhelmed by a frightful sense of urgency. The Franco-Tunisian dispute does not only concern the two countries involved. Tunisia is the key as well to the whole of North Africa. Democratic concessions gained in Tunisia will be expected and fought for in Morocco and Algeria. Defeats suffered by the Tunisian people in their fight for political and trade union liberty will also be defeats duplicated in Algeria and Morocco. When Farhat Hached was killed, French repression was particularly severe in Casablanca.

Will free world labor help build the bargaining table in North Africa? During 1953 this question will have to be answered.



## Hached's Life and Work

*...The cause of peace has lost a valuable supporter with the death of Farhat Hached...*

PHILIP C. JESSUP  
(Delegate of the U. S.)  
U. N. FIRST COMMITTEE  
December 15, 1952

AT the age of 39, at 8:30 a.m., December 5, 1952, Farhat Hached, leading Tunisian labor leader and member of the executive board of the ICFTU, was machine-gunned to death. He was going to the offices of the UGTT (Tunisian General Union of Labor) in Tunis, of which he was the General Secretary.

The news of the politically motivated hit and run killing was flashed within minutes to the Resident General of France in Tunisia, Jean de Hauteclouque, who was in Paris talking to the then French Prime Minister, Antoine Pinay. The high policy talks were about how to crack down on troublesome Tunisians who wanted a greater measure of freedom and independence from their erstwhile protector, France. M. de Hauteclouque left immediately by air for Tunisia, promising swift punishment for the guilty. He said these words to the press before gaining his palace in Tunisia:

"France has a sacred task in Tunisia: to guarantee order and justice and respect of the law. This mission has been confided to me. It will be carried out."

Today, more than eight months later, Farhat Hached's murderer's are still free, but more than fifty responsible trade union leaders belonging to the UGTT are in prisons scattered throughout Tunisia.

But despite official French efforts to obliterate the leadership of the Tunisian labor movement, and so the movement as a whole, as completely as the face of Farhat Hached was reduced by bullets to a non-recognizable bloody, pulpy mass, the Tunisian labor movement still lives, as does the name of Farhat Hached. These facts are a better tribute to Farhat Hached than the thousands of eulogies consecrated to him. That the name and the movement lives tells us much about the man, his concepts.

Farhat Hached was born in the little village of El Abassia, which is in that group of islands off the south eastern coast of Tunisia known as the Isles Kerkennah. They are far away from



the northern city of Stockholm where the ICFTU is now meeting. Far in terms of distance, culture, language, history and tradition. But if Farhat Hached, born in El Abassia, were here today, he would speak to you and you would understand. For during a lifetime of work and study, he succeeded in bridging these gaps.

Farhat Hached was the son of poor fisherfolk. The poverty of the people appalled him. The combination of his own unusual desire for learning, and the realization that nothing could be done without an education drove him on. His extreme attentiveness and curiosity as a student early marked him by his teachers. An interest was taken in him by Armand Cibil, the regional director of the French-Arab schools in the Islands of Kerkennah. Armand Cibil has written the following about Farhat Hached:

... "He was a dedicated and tenacious fighter, but an honorable adversary. Possessed of a refined sensitiveness, Farhat Hached could never be a fanatic or a terrorist.

"Coming from a poverty ridden family, he understood the misery of his people.

"He chose to fight for them.

"He served his ideal.

"He died for it.

"Having been his teacher and director of his conscience for many years, I render this homage to Farhat Hached, who my wife and I called, not without pride, 'our Hached.' "

Farhat Hached understood that a strong labor movement is not something that lives in a vacuo. It depends upon the political framework of the country as a whole, upon civil liberties, upon morale, and in the world Farhat Hached was born into in 1914, he quickly learned that labor lives in One World.

The qualities recognized in him by his teacher Armand Cibil, were also seen by his fellow workers in Sfax, where he was employed as a traffic controller of a transport company. But they saw as well, a militant unionist, and a trusted comrade, a man who could explain to his uneducated comrades what was happening not only in Tunisia, but in other countries as well. He was loved and respected for his qualities as worker, man, leader, and teacher.

During the years of World War II, all union activity came to an end in Tunisia. Farhat Hached was one of the first to understand the nature of the conflict between democracy and fascism. He continued during these years to work at his job and clandestinely promote trade-union organization.

In 1944, he organized at Sfax the Union des Syndicats Autonomes Tunisiens. Because of his intelligent leadership and

energy, this union spread throughout Tunisia and became a movement to be reckoned with. Eventually, it became the UGTT (The Tunisian General Union of Labor).

As a union leader, organizer, and educator, Farhat Hached saw his task as twofold: to raise all the working class from economic servitude to economic status, and at the same time to fill the void of the worker's political unconsciousness with a democratic awareness. This he did.<sup>1</sup>

Farhat Hached never floundered. He always struck out purposefully, but never blindly, towards the ultimate objectives: — a limited wage gain today, but for a better standard of living tomorrow; a union organizing drive among the dock workers in Sfax, so that the railroad workers in Sousse might also someday benefit by that strength; democratic practices in all the unions, so that democracy might eventually reach all the people.

Farhat Hached's concern with all the working people led him inevitably to the unorganized, unsophisticated, and illiterate agricultural worker who worked and lived by the whim of his employer. For the first time in Tunisian history they were organized into a cohesive body. The agricultural section of the UGTT is today one of the strongest, most militant, and most politically conscious.

The strikes of the agricultural workers at El Khemis in November 1949, at Pointinvile, January 1950, and at Enfidaville, November 1950, saw nine workers killed, 20 wounded. During the railroad strikes at Sfax and Djebel-Djelloud, in August 1947, 34 workers were killed, 174 wounded.<sup>2</sup>

During this time of troubles and growth for the Tunisian labor movement, Farhat Hached recognized that the communists in Tunisia were more interested in the directives of the Cominform from Bucharest, than union orders from Tunis, that they were more interested in the struggle for power in the politburo, than in the struggle of the Tunisian workers.

Farhat Hached's experiences with the communists and the communist dominated World Federation of Trade Unions were parallel with those of labor leaders in western countries. Like

<sup>1</sup> On May 12, 1951, the UGTT invited to a meeting at its headquarters representatives of such other organizations of the Tunisian people as the General Union of Tunisian Farmers, the Tunisian Craftsmen's and Tradesmen's Union and the Neo-Destour Party. An "Action Committee to obtain Constitutional Guarantees and Representation of the People" was set up. This Committee drew up a Manifesto calling for democratic constitutional guarantees, the election of a legislative assembly by free and universal suffrage, and the establishment of town councils composed of freely elected Tunisian members. (See Manifesto, page 30.

<sup>2</sup> See Hached's article "Anniversaries", page 25.



labor leaders in the western world he soon learned that ends and means are so entangled that changing one often changes the other too. He left the communist dominated and manipulated World Federation of Trade Unions in June 1950 and joined the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions in March 1951.

For the French colonists and fonctionnaires who settled in Tunisia and the rest of North Africa, and for the Foreign Office in the Quai d'Orsay in Paris, this growing political and economic awareness as it manifested itself in growing Tunisian and world union activity, spelled only trouble.

For those who were not blind, it was a sign that the patronizing imperial relationship France had maintained in Tunisia since the establishment of the protectorate in 1881, with all of its economic profits, and flattering personal ego rewards based on a superior-inferior race relationship, was coming to an end.

An event that particularly incensed the French and hardened their opposition and hostility to the Tunisian trade union movement was the occasion of Farhat Hached's speech as an honored guest at the 70th Annual Convention of the American Federation of Labor held in San Francisco, California, in September 1951. They viewed it as an attempt on the part of Tunisian laboring and political elements to line up the liberal elements in the United States against France and for Tunisia.

Much of the provocative propaganda that preceded the assassination of Farhat Hached played upon the theme of "Farhat Hached, the American," and "Farhat Hached, the imperialist American Grocer's man."

Farhat Hached himself neither overestimated nor underestimated the significance of his American trip. He said at the convention:

"This is the first time in the history of the labor movement, in fact the first time in history that a representative of the North African trade unions has crossed the Atlantic Ocean to establish direct contact with the New World and to forge ties of friendship and solidarity between workers of two continents.

"The workers of the oppressed countries, frustrated in their daily lives, deprived of their human dignity and their national and democratic liberties look to democratic America, to the powerful trade union movement and to the active solidarity of the workers of the United States for action in keeping with the policy and principles . . . enunciated . . .

"Certainly the workers of Tunisia, like all workers engaged in a struggle, must first of all rely on their own strength. Amid incredibly difficult and dangerous conditions, free trade unionism has become a well established force in Tunisia."

JAMES B. CAREY, Secretary-Treasurer Congress of Industrial Organizations; the late WILLIAM GREEN, President, American Federation of Labor; and FARHAT HACHED.





# The Conspiracy Against Hached

THE growth of Farhat Hached as a world labor figure, his personification and idealization for all colonial Africa as the symbol of a resurgent Africa, and his own enormous prestige in his own country with his people and with his sovereign, the Bey of Tunisia, marked him in the eyes of the French as a most dangerous man, and one to be gotten rid of.

Neither the French administration nor the political party of the French in Tunisia, the "Rassemblement des Français de Tunisie"<sup>1</sup> could forgive him for having organized the Tunisian workers, for making them aware of their rights both as workers and as Tunisians. For his devotion to the Tunisian working man, and because of his opposition to a colonial system that fostered impossible labor conditions, Farhat Hached became the principal target of French attacks.

After the arrest of the nationalist, anti-communist Neo-Destour leaders on January 18, 1952, and the stringent measures circumscribing civil liberties that followed on the heels of the state of siege clamped on Tunisia, Hached emerged as the natural leader of all the people.

He returned to Tunisia on April 30, 1952 from the United States where he had attended the meetings of the U. N. Security Council on the Tunisian question, and made contact with American trade union organizations. French police immediately confiscated his passport and formally cautioned him against leaving the country again, regardless of the reason.

French authorities were still smarting from Hached's courageous denunciations and exposure of French repression and General Garbay's excesses. Since Hached could not be silenced or bought, he and the powerful organization he created, the UGTT, would have to be destroyed.

On May 25, 1950, Senators Colonna and Brunet, representing the French residents in Tunisia at the Conseil de la République, demanded the French government dissolve the UGTT and arrest

<sup>1</sup>The Rassemblement was organized and is headed by Senator Antoine Colonna. It is the organization of the French colons in Tunisia. It would like to maintain the political and economic status quo with all its advantages for the colonialists. As an indication of the changing times however, it is interesting to note that during the recently completed elections, Senator Colonna's party polled far less than all circles had expected.

its leaders, "for conspiring against the security of the State, in conformity with the precedent set by the Tunisian CGTT trial of 1924."<sup>2</sup>

The campaign against Farhat Hached and the UGTT continued to gather momentum during the next two years. In Paris the powerful French colonialist lobby agitated continuously. In Tunisia, the French press campaign became increasingly virulent and venomous. In any other country libel laws would have been invoked. In Tunisia, the slanderers of Farhat Hached enjoyed complete immunity from the law.

On June 7, 1952, the colonialist newspaper TUNISIE-FRANCE attacked Farhat Hached "who had gone to Brussels and Paris, New York and Washington during the height of the crisis while the Tunisian Question was being discussed at the United Nations." TUNISIE-FRANCE felt the French authorities should have refused Hached a visa and so prevent him from waging an "anti-French" campaign abroad.

On August 18, 1952, the same paper published a virulent article demanding the French Government give reason why "the Secretary-General of the UGTT continues to enjoy scandalous immunity." The article was motivated by the fact that Hached had received a mandate from the UGTT to counsel the Bey on the French proposed Plan of Reforms.<sup>3</sup>

But French authorities could not start proceedings against Farhat Hached or the UGTT because the Tunisian trade-union leader had not fomented any plots or participated in any acts of violence. The agitation and disturbances that had been troubling Tunisia were due to the "get tough" policy of M. de Hautecloque, the brutal police operations, and General Garbay's "clean-ups."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> (Journal Officiel de la République Française, 6 June 1952, pages 2,652-2,653.) The 1924 precedent was set by the trial of M'hammed Ali, founder of the CGTT (Tunisian Confederation of Labor). Accused of conspiracy, he was on February 5, 1925 sentenced and deported. He died in exile.

<sup>3</sup> A "Consultative Committee of Forty Members" was appointed by the Bey last summer to study the French "reform proposals" and give him its advice. The Committee, representing all shades of Tunisian opinion, unanimously rejected the proposals, chiefly because they provided for French participation in Tunisian assemblies without obligating them to renounce their French citizenship. Most of the members of this Committee were deported into concentration camps in the south. Their homes were destroyed by bombs.

<sup>4</sup> The "clean-up" methods appear in a report made by General Garbay on February 25, 1952 (reproduced in the Cahiers du Témoignage Chrétien, No. 24, p.37). The General envisages two sorts of "clean-ups". The first, a "rapid and brutal operation, executed by surprise; IN SUM, A WAR OPERATION. The second, a long-winded operation by units having the time to know their sectors; IN SUM, A PACIFICATION OPERATION."

The General adds the note: "In no case are heavy arms to be employed but machine-gunning is authorized."



The French colonists ignored French law which did not suit their purposes and decided to go outside the law to gain their ends. At the end of June 1952, the following inflammatory tract was distributed:

"Group yourselves in your villages, in your neighborhoods; organize yourselves in commandos, arm yourselves and strike, strike mercilessly the criminals, trouble makers; eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth. Vive la France!" For the signature, a Red hand was drawn.<sup>1</sup>

The call to action was heeded. The headquarters of the UGTT at Bizerte was destroyed by a bomb. The propaganda attacks by the Red Hand (la Main Rouge) against Farhat Hached increased. The following is one example of their literature:

#### AGAINST THE ENSLAVEMENT OF TUNISIA

by the imperialist American grocers,  
the exterminators of the Red race,  
the assassins of the Porto-Ricans,  
the maintainers of black slavery,  
the hangmen of the Philippines

Rally to the RED HAND

Against Farhat Hached the American

Rally to the RED HAND

Against the rottenness of the accomplice

Beylical court.

Rally to the RED HAND

Which will make of this country a French

land of liberty in the old tri-colored tradition of 1789.

#### LIBERTE- EGALITE-FRATERNITE

Free men, Tunisian brothers,

Moslems, Christians, Jews

For our threatened independence,

To safeguard our ancient Mediterranean  
civilization,

Arab and Latin

RALLY TO THE RED HAND

A particularly vicious attack against Farhat Hached was published during the 1952 United Nations General Assembly session. On November 28, 1952, the French newspaper PARIS appearing in Casablanca and Algiers denounced Hached and

<sup>1</sup> Reproduced by the République algérienne, September 19, 1952.

Bourguiba<sup>1</sup> as the "persons principally guilty," and quoted a Syrian proverb:

"If a man threatens to kill you, strike him at the head." The article concluded: "It is there one must strike today. As long as you have not accomplished this manly gesture, this liberating gesture, you will not have fulfilled your duty."

Despite official French press censorship in Tunisia ostensibly directed against just such inflammatory articles, the newspaper was allowed free circulation in Tunis.

Farhat Hached meanwhile had been personally receiving threats against his life from the Red Hand. This fact was well known. In a letter of November 29, 1952, Hached wrote to Nouri Boudali, Deputy Secretary General of the UGTT, then at Paris:

November 29, 1952

Dear Nouri,

*If you are still in Paris when these few lines reach you, I think it will be necessary for you to stay for another week.*

*It seems that the policy of repression gains momentum and a rumor persists which forecasts some significant events. The U.G.T.T. in particular will be a target. At the press conferences at the Residency there is open talk of my impending arrest. A concerted campaign is preparing public opinion for new acts of repression such as the execution of those condemned to death, the establishment of summary "justice" and mass arrests which might even reach the palace of the Bey. Attacks against Tunisians continue and are aimed particularly at the "Forty."<sup>2</sup>*

*The gentlemen of the colonial Gestapo operate stealthily. Some quite important arrests were made in recent days. The deportees are said to be at Remada (in addition to the ex-deportees of Djerba who were transferred to Bordj-Lebeuf). No one knows exactly how many persons are at Remada and who they are.*

*It is known, however, that a large number of patriots are held incommunicado at Grombalia, where for two weeks they have been subjected to undescribable tortures. Lawyers are not able to find out where their clients are being kept.*

*The people have been rendered defenseless and delivered to a mafia which terrorizes them. Under the pretext of looking for*

<sup>1</sup> Habib Bourguiba is the President of the Neo-Destour party of Tunisia. During the 1951 Chenik "Government of Negotiation" the Neo-Destour was represented in the Tunisian cabinet. When French policy changed in Tunisia from negotiation to imperial high-handedness, Habib Bourguiba and the other nationalist leaders were arrested. Bourguiba is now held incommunicado on the Island of Galite.

<sup>2</sup> See footnote 3, page 13.



saboteurs, the authorities have terrorized whole regions (Gabès), established the principle of collective responsibility and carried out reprisals.

Arrested persons are held incommunicado. If they are indicted, they should be allowed to arrange for their defense. If they are exiled, their families should be told where they are interned; yet, neither is being done. They are incarcerated and suffer ill-treatment and tortures of all kinds, after which sentences as demanded by the press of the Rassemblement are meted out to them and immediately carried out.

At the same time, "official" terrorists indulge themselves to their heart's content in an ever increasing number of misdeeds without any interference from the police.

There is talk about destroying everything that is still "alive" in the people and REACTIONARIES BLINDED BY SPITE ARE HITTING ABOVE ALL AT THE U.G.T.T.

On the eve of the U.N. debate, this situation should be exposed. It is urgent that the people and their Sovereign be protected against intensified repressive action.

Hope to see you soon.

Cordially yours,

Farhat

## The Assassination

.... In the light of such painful occurrences as the dastardly assassination of Mr. Farhat Hached, it could be said that Tunisia was today a centre of trouble which was liable to spread far beyond the borders of the country and to represent a real threat to peace if the the situation was not remedied in time. ....

MME. VIJAYA LAKSHMI PANDIT  
(Delegate of India)

U.N. FIRST COMMITTEE, DECEMBER 9, 1952

On December 1, 1952, the French Residency General refused to grant Hached an exit visa to go to New York where he was to attend a meeting of the ICFTU Executive Board. Four days later, on December 5, Farhat Hached was murdered.

Despite the threats against his life, all arms were denied him and his bodyguards. Under the state of siege law, French military tribunals decreed severe punishment for any Tunisian found in possession of any arms of any description whatsoever.

Even shoe horns and keys were placed in the category of forbidden arms. At the same time French authorities were not only encouraging French residents to arm themselves, but actually supplying them with arms.

Farhat Hached's body was discovered at 9 a.m. on the route between Tunis and Zaghuan. His body was riddled with bullets, his head smashed unrecognizably. As reconstructed, the generally accepted version of the circumstances of the crime seem to be as follows.

Fearful for the safety of his wife and four children, Farhat Hached had sent them away to stay with friends. He himself had passed the night of December 4 at a neighbor's house in Radès, a few kilometres from Tunis. On the fifth December, a little after 8 a.m. he had gotten into his car alone to go to UGTT headquarters in Tunis. Scarcely out of Radès, he was stopped by an automobile block on the road. The occupants of the waiting car opened machine-gun fire on Hached and believing him to be dead, sped away. Seriously wounded, Hached was still able to get out of his car and reach a light truck that was nearby. But before the truck could get started, a car drove up. Hached was given up to the occupants of the car who drove off in the direction of Zaghuan. This time the assassins finished the job before abandoning the body a few kilometres further on.

The total time elapsed from the firing of the first bullet to the dumping of the mutilated body was about a quarter of an hour. It took place in broad daylight and in the presence of some 15 witnesses.

Despite these circumstances, all favorable to the solving of the crime, if not its prevention, the crime remains unsolved. Why? A partial answer is supplied when we consider the action of the French authorities immediately on learning of the murder.<sup>1</sup>

As soon as the reports of the assassination had reached Tunis, almost within the hour, the Tunisian investigating magistrate, Brahim Abdel Baki, and the Deputy Public Prosecutor, Hedi

<sup>1</sup> Immediately after the assassination of Hached a wave of terror was unleashed on Tunisia. The Resident General had the principal leaders of the UGTT arrested and sent to a concentration camp in the south: Prof. Mahmoud Messadi, Amor Riahi, Sadok Shacbi, etc., as well as most of the Neo-Destour leaders still at liberty. Nouri Boudali, deputy Secretary-General of the UGTT was placed in forced residence in France. UGTT offices throughout Tunisia were occupied by the police, trade-union meetings were forbidden. The few leaders of the UGTT who were still free decided, nonetheless, to hold a three-day strike of protest and mourning. The incidents that marked this period of total censorship are still not well known. The sympathy strike called by the Moroccan workers in their country served the French authorities as a pretext for the terrible Casablanca massacres. During this period several Tunisians were executed after summary trials. Thanks to this regime of terror, Resident General de Hauteclocque obtained on December 19, 1952 the promulgation of a completely illusory plan of reforms from the Bey.



Ben Arfa, rushed to the spot. When they arrived they found neither body, nor car, nor witnesses, only a cordon of French police around the bloodied ground. The French also succeeded in cordoning off any Tunisian investigation by claiming investigating jurisdiction. French justice would have to prevail they said, since the character of the murder was political. The French authorities had transferred the body to the military hospital. All other evidence had been scrupulously effaced. During the night Hached's body was transported by a French Navy gunboat to the Kerkennah Islands, Hached's birthplace. The funeral "à la sauvette" (on the run) was held the following morning. Only Hached's family and the French authorities were allowed to be present. The funeral farce was carried out despite the recorded opposition of Hached's family and the UGTT.

## The Responsibility of the French Authorities

The French have consistently answered all charges of implication in the murder by pointing out that it was the last thing they would have desired at a time when the United Nations was debating the Tunisian question. At best however, the moral repercussions which the French wanted to avoid were of a short-run order. Whereas the murder of Hached and the continuing attempt to destroy the UGTT was obviously to their great long-run advantage. On the eve of the assassination, the French Residency had received information that the Bey, with the backing of Farhat Hached, his most trusted advisor, was planning a devastating proclamation before the United Nations concerning his dispute with France.

On the same day, Senator Colonna had arrived in Tunis to confer with the principal leaders of the Rassemblement. A few hours before the assassination, Colonna's paper, *TUNISIE-FRANCE* wrote: "The population is reaching the point of considering taking the law into its own hands."

It is clear that Hached's assassins acted with the conviction they were best serving the aims of the Resident General.

As of this moment, the Residency General's office and the investigating French police have surrounded their investigations with a smoke-screen of fantastic hypotheses.<sup>1</sup> "The communists

<sup>1</sup>These hypotheses were put forth in a "Confidential" memorandum from the Residency General to the French Magistrate in charge of the case. It illustrates the successful attempt the Residency made to influence and confuse the course of the investigation for its own political purposes.

did it," they say. Then why haven't the communists been arrested? "A Tunisian group did it," they say. It is precisely Farhat Hached's tremendous popularity with the Tunisian masses that alarmed the French. "It was the deed of a foreign agent, or agents," they say. Then why haven't the special services been put on the case? The only possibility the Residency General did not admit is that the murder was the work of a French colonist terrorist organization. Yet the murder could not have been the work of any other group.

The deliberate fumbling, there is no other way to characterize it, of the French police assigned to the case can neither be excused or explained. An on-the-spot reconstruction of the crime was not held until March 18, 1953, more than three months after the event.

The initial action of the French police officers Passant, Dellerme, and Nullet, who were acting under the orders of judiciary police head Bourrust, unquestionably prevented the discovery of the truth. These police officers, using the pretext of maintaining public order, had removed the body of Farhat Hached and his car, before the arrival of the judiciary authorities. The head of the Service of Judiciary Identification did not appear at the scene of the crime until the end of the day. Not one of his officers present admitted any responsibility for making a preliminary inquiry. The police deny the testimony of six witnesses, including Mr. Stoll, a French farmer in the neighborhood, who said that at the spot where Hached's body was discovered there were automobile tracks. Who effaced these tire tracks? — tracks which could have led to the identification of the assassin's car. Information supplied by witnesses Hamadi and Khemis who were both present during the murder was not used.

No strong effort was made to get the eye-witness account of the five European occupants of the truck into which Farhat Hached had gone for aid when wounded. Their testimony, solicited or volunteered, could have supplied the police not only with a description of the murder-car, but with positive identification of the murderers as well. Why didn't they speak? Were the five intimidated? Or did they feel they had no responsibility to help in the solution of a crime which shocked the world's conscience?

Whatever the reason or reasons, these five key witnesses have been allowed to drop into the limbo of anonymity. The French in Tunisia are hoping that the murder of Farhat Hached will fall into another limbo — that of unsolved murders.

This organization of world labor must not let either the murder of Farhat Hached or the ideals he fought for fall into the wished for oblivion of our common enemies.



## Statements

### on the Assassination of Farhat Hached

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#### STATEMENT BY THE INTERNATIONAL CONFEDERATION OF FREE TRADE UNIONS

The Executive Board has been profoundly shocked by the sudden and tragic blow which has struck the free world by the brutal assassination of Farhat Hached, General Secretary of the General Union of Tunisian Workers and a member of this Board. The death of our friend and colleague is an irreparable loss to the free trade union movement of his country, to the Tunisian people as a whole, and, above all, to the cause of freedom throughout the world.

It is a sad commentary that Hached lost his life at a moment when his place would have been at the meeting of this Board, a place which was denied him by the French Government.

The ICFTU has repeatedly warned of the aggravation of the situation in Tunisia which has been due to the refusal of the French Government to enter into serious negotiations with the representatives of the people of Tunisia about the establishment of self-government in that country. In this tragic hour we feel compelled to state that we cannot absolve from responsibility those who have failed to respond to the just democratic aspirations of the Tunisian workers and of the Tunisian people as a whole and to urge once more that both trade union rights and civil and political rights be speedily restored in Tunisia and that negotiations for the establishment of a regime of self-government and democracy be initiated.

#### STATEMENT BY GEORGE MEANY, PRESIDENT OF THE AMERICAN FEDERATION OF LABOR

Fanatical terrorists have murdered in cold blood Farhat Hached, the stalwart leader of the General Union of Tunisian Workers.

Our colleague and friend was brutally killed while he was on the way to a trade union meeting.

For this gruesome blow against free labor in Tunis and democratic labor and human freedom throughout the world,

the French government's colonial policy must bear a great deal if not all the responsibility.

This dastardly crime has dealt a fatal blow to the hopes and prospects for a peaceful and just settlement of the crisis in Tunisia. This assassination has taken from Tunisian labor its finest and firmest link with the ranks of democratic world labor. The murder of Hached, member of the Executive Committee of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, is a Godsend to the Kremlin. Through their policy of repression, terror, concentration camps and permanent state of siege, French colonial authorities have brought about a situation which had its logical and ghastly conclusion — the killing of Hached. The gates of North Africa have thus been opened wide to Communist subversion, chaos and counter-violence.

Unfortunately, the critical situation in Tunisia has now been aggravated by the action of the French colonial authorities in arresting and interning Hached's colleagues in the leadership of the Tunisian Federation of Labor.

The terror and ruthlessness in Tunisia are not merely French internal problems. They are first of all a grave threat to the peace of the world.

Our government and the American people who have aided France in her every hour of need, have a vital stake in bringing justice and peace in Tunisia. The American Federation of Labor has, for some time prior to the murder of Hached, sought, in the most friendly fashion, to have the French authorities lift the state of siege, restore all civil rights and release all political prisoners in Tunisia in order to create the atmosphere for an amicable and just settlement of the vexing problem of Tunisian national freedom. We have been particularly insistent on the French authorities granting Farhat Hached the right to leave his native land to participate in the meeting of the Executive Board of the ICFTU just closed in New York.

Our repeated appeals have been in vain. Instead, Hached was kept by sheer force in Tunisia and then he was beaten to death by gangsters who serve only sordid privileged interests and defile the good name of France as the land of liberty, equality and fraternity.

The A.F. of L. vigorously condemns this brutal political murder.

We demand a full-scale investigation by the U.N. of the atrocities and savage violation of human rights in Tunisia.

We urge our government to exercise its full influence to assure the dissolution of the fanatical colonial terrorist bands, to restore all civil rights to the Tunisian people and to bring into this situation the good offices of the U.N. for speeding a just and sound solution of the Tunisian crisis.



In mourning the loss of this noble fighter for human freedom, we urge the French people to do their all in order to have their government adopt a truly democratic and peaceful course towards the people of Tunis.

The A.F. of L. is confident that the free trade union movement of France will serve as the spearhead of the forces striving to have their country adopt a policy which will serve the cause of human liberty, justice, national freedom and peace.

**STATEMENT BY WALTER P. REUTHER  
PRESIDENT OF THE CONGRESS OF INDUSTRIAL ORGANIZATIONS**

The Congress of Industrial Organizations notes with regret and horror the assassination of Farhat Hached, general secretary of the General Union of Tunisian Workers and a leader of those heroic trade union forces of freedom which are rallying in the Middle East. His death came at a time when he would have been in New York attending the meeting of the executive board of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions had not the French Government refused him permission to come.

Farhat Hached was an outstanding personage whose leadership extended far beyond the field of labor. It was given to all the people of his own nation who are striving for independence, for social and economic justice, and for recognition of the dignity of man.

No one knows at present who is to blame, but in the deepest sense, it is the French Government which must bear a large share of the responsibility. For by its refusal to understand the nature of the popular and social movements now in ferment throughout the Middle East; by its adamant stand against any sincere negotiations with those moderate nationalist groups in Tunisia which openly supported the cause of democracy and the free world; by its deliberate measures to intimidate and obstruct the activities of the General Union of Tunisian Workers —by all these things, the French made it impossible for a moderate like Hached to function.

Assassins can kill men like Farhat Hached, but not their ideals or the movements they have led. The forces he built will carry on after him until the goal of freedom has been won for all men.

His murder came but a few days after he had transmitted to the National CIO convention the greetings of the Tunisian workers and their best wishes for its success and for the strengthening of solidarity on the whole trade union front. The CIO extends its most sincere and deepest sympathy to his family and to his fellow workers and fighters for Tunisian freedom.

# ARTICLES

and

# SPEECHES

by

# FARHAT HACHED

*(Translation from French)*



## TO MY FRENCH FELLOW-WORKER IN TUNISIA

*Mission*<sup>1</sup>, July 14, 1950

**T**ODAY I want to address myself to you, French worker who works on the soil of my fatherland — white collar worker, civil servant, employee of a private enterprise, of a corporation holding a concession or of a public service, having resided in our country for a long or only short time.

I speak to you in a simple manner, without protocol or false solemnity, as a worker does who speaks to another worker.

I am speaking to you as one worker to another, regardless of the trade union or political party you may belong to, since I know how much workers are responsive to the direct language of another worker.

You work and live on the soil of my country, Tunisia, amidst your kin. Your father may be a colonist, industrialist, high civil servant, director of a firm, lawyer, physician or a simple worker like yourself.

You have found in our country the joy of family life; you have even been able to form at leisure your French regional societies; you apply freely for all posts in Tunisian civil service; you enjoy fully the rights of free citizens in electing your representatives to the Grand Council of Tunisia, the Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture, the Regional Councils and the elected municipal governments (if there are any).

Your children attend all kinds of schools at all levels; your youth enjoys happy vacations; it is very seldom that workers are jobless for more than a few weeks; you do not know unemployment and misery.

As you very well know, your Tunisian fellow-worker who walks at your side lives under quite different material and spiritual conditions. If you aspire to a better life, seeking abundance or even luxury, your Tunisian fellow-worker tries in vain to satisfy the most elementary of his vital needs.

You know under what conditions he and his family live. I do not have to tell you about them. . . . The bad shepherds have conjured up for you new and even more promising horizons and you, attracted by this mirage, have yielded, seeking all the time an easier life and a privileged social position.

However, French voices have been heard which have tried to make you correct your error. They have tried to make you listen to reason, to have you abandon your illusions, however tempting they may be, and return to the reality of human life in the 20th century.

<sup>1</sup> *Mission* is the organ of the Tunisian Nationalists banned by the French authorities since February 1952.

Sometimes they have appealed to your civic spirit, sometimes they have tried to make you understand the sense of the liberties whose champion France wants to be in order that you may realize the necessity of returning to a more reasonable conception of relations between individuals and peoples.

But the voice of vanity has been dominant 'till now and you have been more inclined to follow the road of false grandeur than that leading to an understanding of the political and social realities which, sooner or later, will unavoidably assert themselves.

This voice of vanity is still raised today and it is more arrogant and raucous than ever.

It tries to drown the rising voice in favor of the rights of individuals and peoples and prevent it from reaching you; it tries to keep alive your illusions and chimerical calculations.

Your Tunisian fellow-worker, however, has preserved his common sense and sang-froid. He knows that the grip of colonialism will be loosened until it can no longer maintain the abominable servitude in which he has been kept for decades. He conducts an active struggle in order to advance that date, but he hopes that you will leave in time the dangerous road along which pretentious men want to lead you. In order to satisfy their ambition and, in addition, to consolidate their immoral privileges, they will not hesitate to send you into open combat against the Tunisian people. . . . But while they will lose their influence and prebends, you will perhaps lose your life like the soldiers in Indo-China and you will surely lose the friendship of your Tunisian fellow-worker.

Look here, my friend, we really do not mean to harm you, we only want you to understand that the Tunisian worker is your equal. Is that too much to ask of you? I do not think so.

If you agree with me you will recognize his right to be in his own country and he will recognize your right to work in liberty and to live in his country under the same conditions under which he is treated on the soil of France, your fatherland . . .

## ANNIVERSARIES

*Under the title "Anniversaries" Farhat Hached wrote an article on August 3, 1951 in MISSION on the meaning of the struggle of the Tunisian working class for social progress and emancipation.*

**O**N August 3, 1947, the police fired on striking workers in Djebel-Djelloud, killing 4 and wounding 8.

On August 5, the armed forces which had been called in by Civil Administrator Guérin attacked strikers in Sfax near the



railroad station and the Sfax-Gafsa Railway Yards; as a result 30 were killed and more than 150 injured, of whom a score had to undergo major amputations.

It was the first violent blow directed not against individual workers but against the young and already vigorous Tunisian national trade union movement, whose development and fighting efficiency began to arouse the concern of the dominant power in the land.

Consequently, it was necessary to meticulously prepare plans for an operation aimed at destroying a movement whose rapid growth in all parts of Tunisia had made it an increasingly formidable organized force.

This explains why such strong means were used to break the strike, and the brutality and the suddenness of the attack whose real motives were disclosed when the Civil Administrator stated before the Magistrate's Court that its objective had been "to achieve a complete encirclement and obtain the utmost effect of surprise."

Thus, the UGTT received its baptism of fire but, in regard to surprise, it was the enemy who, in the end, got quite a lot of it.

On the morrow of the tragic day of August 5, 1947, an impressive demonstration of the entire population of Sfax took place, joining in a really imposing procession to accompany their martyrs to their last resting place.

In a town besieged by troops, the people of Sfax went into mourning, and their devotion gave them new strength and instilled in them the firm will to continue the fight.

August 5, 1947.

August 5, 1951.

Four years have passed.

Four years of intense struggle during which our valiant trade union movement, always faithful to its pledge at the bier of its dead, has marched on although its path has been impeded by obstacles of all kinds.

The forces of repression continue to attack our labor movement. Other victims have in the meantime joined their brothers of August 5 who, in their turn, had been preceded by their four comrades of Djebel-Djelloud fallen the day before.

And the list has grown longer, longer all the time.

Potenville . . .

Enfidaville . . .

. . . Besides the dozens and hundreds of other victims of repression who, bullied, mistreated, tortured and imprisoned, endured the worst sufferings for the triumph of their just and noble cause.

Souk El Khemis,  
Sainte Marie du Zit,  
Mateur,

Kalaat — Djerda, etc., etc. . . .

They signify as many sacrifices made by our working class in the struggle for social progress, freedom and well-being, against tyranny, exploitation and French domination.

Our trade union movement has grown in spite of all hindrances and attacks. Far from diminishing its ardor and its militancy, the sacrifices of its members, on the contrary, have given it an ever increasing vigor.

The dead of August 5 as well as their brothers who preceded or followed them in the last sacrifice are enshrined in the hearts of the workers. Their example guides our action and our daily struggle.

The commemoration of the anniversary of August 5 is of special importance this year. It assumes this importance in the face of present-day events and the recrudescence of acts of repression of all kinds whose victims are active trade-unionists.

Now pending before the Military Tribunal are trials against leaders of our trade union movement for so-called "offenses" which, however, were but the exercising of their normal trade union functions.

On August 5, the leaders of our national trade union movement, representing all regional and local federations, will meet at Sfax in order to pay to our dead the sincere and fraternal homage of our organization which continues to fight for our good cause.

Habib Achour will still be absent at this roll-call due to a prohibition which prevents him momentarily from performing his duty. But he will be present at the ceremony with his thoughts and his heart as he was in the first ranks when the first bullet struck him.

Let us on this August 5, 1951, renew our pledge to serve the cause of labor with self-abnegation and devotion until final success.

Let us swear to remain faithful to the sacrifices of our martyrs and to continue the struggle for whose victory they died.

Let us unite still more closely and strengthen increasingly our front against the foe, the enemy of our progress and emancipation.

Let us be worthy of those who built, day after day, at the cost of so many pains, efforts, sufferings, privations and at the cost of their lives the magnificent house of free and democratic labor in order to integrate our own efforts and derive satisfaction from the knowledge that we have fulfilled our duty.



Thus, we will then be able to lay claim to our part of happiness and freedom in a future where justice and peace will prevail.

## THE REAL MISERY AND THE HOPE OF THE TUNISIAN PEOPLE - - - IN CONTACT WITH REALITIES

*Mission, August 31, 1951*

**I**N order to realize what the real economic and social situation of our country is, nothing is more useful than to make direct contact with the people. Only by seeing with one's own eyes and hearing with one's own ears does one become aware of the extent of the disaster into which an anti-national, anti-social and regressive policy in all fields of our existence has plunged us.

That is what we did when we went first into the Sahel region and then into the Middle-West, two areas where the contrast is sharp but where the heart of the same people beats in unison, the same people who share the cruel fate imposed upon them and who are more than ever determined to fight against a regime which is the cause of their misery.

A dozen meetings, several conferences, multiple contacts with trade-union bodies, active trade unionists, conversations with workers, unemployed, fellahs, artisans, civil servants, young people, and veterans during an entire week have permitted us to get acquainted with the problems and concerns of the population of the whole 4th Region and to draw up the balance-sheet of a situation which has become untenable.

The regime has failed completely.

I have seen dozens, hundreds of young people roaming the streets like refugees without asylum, without work, without guidance.

I have seen half-naked women and old men who seek their food in that providential prickly pear and then end up in an infirmary whose staff is overburdened with work; the cases of constipation are countless.

I have seen entire populations who were famished, bewildered, awaiting in vain the promised jobs or the assistance which does not arrive.

I have also seen statistics of unemployed, statistics of "needy" people who are not able to work, statistics of credits which were granted and of the amount of grain which was distributed.

As far as the jobless are concerned, only 4 per cent are employed for 15 days for 200 francs per day. Most of them must walk 30 kilometers in order to reach the place where they work.

The needy receive on the average 1 kilogramme of grain per person in certain centers, only 700 grammes in some others.

But I have also seen vegetation, water, prosperity and happiness displayed in the new paradise of Kasserine from which, however, the Tunisians are completely banned.

I have seen how the colonized domains enjoy abundance and affluence, side by side with the unspeakable misery in which the entire Tunisian working population must live.

Governmental efforts to ameliorate the effects of this inexorable crisis should be made precisely during the critical summer period when thirst, hunger, and illness have plunged the population into a most atrocious misery.

In the esparto belt the crop does not start again before October. At about the same time modest quantities of oleaginous products are harvested in the Sahel area. Thus, if public works projects were put into effect before October, they could be most effective in helping the people to overcome the crisis.

But our Public Works Administration has decided otherwise; projects just begin in October!

Misery certainly is not the monopoly of the 4th Region. It is more frightful in the South and Far-South of Tunisia where the population is even more disinherited. This same misery has reached the North, where from day to day unemployment takes on frightening proportions and where the starved have stormed bakeshops . . .

This short sketch of the deplorable material situation with which the urban and rural proletariat has to grapple will only confirm the warnings which we have unceasingly addressed to the public authorities.

This situation is an obvious proof of administrative failure and lack of governmental foresight. It is the consequence of a policy directed against the masses, against social progress, against the economic prosperity of the people.

But I have also seen other things and I have learnt that there is no reason for despair, I have seen an entire people ready to fight. I have seen workers who, after having voiced their complaints, proudly spoke of their devotion to their trade union movement. I have seen thousands of Tunisians come to our meetings, applaud the UGTT program of action, proclaim their faith in the success of their cause.

I have seen how the various elements of the population overflowed the meetings organized under the auspices of the Action Committee for Constitutional Guarantees and Popular Representation (Comité d'action pour les garanties constitutionnelles et la représentation populaire).

Yet I have also seen an outburst of activity on the part of the authorities "charged with maintaining order."



These authorities, whose first concern is "public order", do not care about the material situation of the working population; what is worse, they do their utmost in order to impede progress wherever it manifests itself thanks to the initiative of the people. And they keep a vigilant watch in order to suppress freedom of assembly, even claiming the right to prohibit conferences which are held in private premises on personal invitation.

Consequently, new judiciary proceedings have been instituted against the organizers of these meetings and against myself. A *procès-verbal* at Ksour-Essaf, another at Thala will lengthen the list of cases whose epilogue military tribunals probably will write.

But never mind!

Our mission has been completed and it has completely fortified us. The distress which we felt when we saw the misery under which our people suffers has but increased our eagerness to fight against that misery.

The joy with which we witnessed the confidence of the masses in the national organizations, the faith in the future, the real maturity of a people that suffers and fights, fully conscious of its duties and its rights, impels us to march forward even more determinedly.

The cruelty of the authorities, the fanatical obstinacy with which they pursue their policy of repression, their systematic attack against the most elementary freedoms arouse us to fight still more tenaciously against the regime which wants to keep us enslaved.

## MANIFESTO

ADOPTED ON 12 MAY 1951 BY THE COMMITTEE  
FOR THE DEFENCE OF CONSTITUTIONAL GUAR-  
ANTEES AND REPRESENTATION OF THE PEOPLE

CONSIDERING that the present régime of the Protectorate is an arbitrary régime imposed upon the people, in which an irresponsible Government exercises absolute power;

CONSIDERING that the Protectorate, an essentially provisional régime, at the outset has led, in the economic field, to a régime of exploitation and, in the political field, to a régime of direct administration which despoils Tunisian sovereignty of its essential rights and deprives the People of its legislative powers, that it has prevented the People from enjoying constitutional guarantees and social progress, thus remaining after 70 years the sole obstacle to the establishment of a democratic régime based on representation of the People;

CONSIDERING that the system of representation existing in Tunisia — Grand Council and municipal authorities\* — is but a caricature of the principle of representation of the people, that it violates the principle of unity of sovereignty and that it is incapable, in view of its composition, its electoral procedure and its powers, to guarantee the safeguard of the interests of the nation;

CONSIDERING that, as a result of this situation, the interests of the Tunisian people in general and of the masses in particular have been sacrificed to the exploitation of the capitalists who have seized the wealth of the country thereby creating a situation which is constantly deteriorating and of which all classes of the Tunisian population are suffering whether it be in a social, economic or cultural field;

CONSIDERING the rift between this irresponsible régime and this retrograde system of representation on the one hand, and the degree of conscience and political maturity of the Tunisian population on the other hand, which degree has been clearly shown in the continuous fight it has put up to conquer its constitutional guarantees and a system of representation of the people based on a free universal and direct suffrage;

CONSIDERING that national sovereignty can be exercised fully only insofar as it rests upon a democratic constitution and full representation of the people;

CONSIDERING that colonialism, which must disappear, is a source of division and antagonism between nations and that it is a main cause for the survival of this arbitrary régime;

CONSIDERING that the United Nations Charter approved by France has proclaimed the right of Peoples to elect their own government and to set up institutions of their own choice within the framework of democratic principles;

CONSIDERING that this International Charter imposes upon the signatories the obligation to lead dependent nations to their liberation;

CONSIDERING that the presence of a foreign colony within the country cannot stand in the way of the natural right of the Tunisian people to enjoy its freedom and its imprescriptible right to choose the form of Government it wishes;

FOR ALL THESE REASONS, the Committee for the Defense of Constitutional Guarantees and Representation of the People hereby decides to carry out a vast national campaign for the fulfillment of the following objectives:

- 1) democratic constitutional guarantees;
- 2) election of a legislative assembly by universal, free and

\*In townships, these authorities are elected whereas in the rural districts, they are appointed by the French authorities.



direct suffrage, towards which the Tunisian Government would be responsible;

- 3) setting up of Tunisian municipalities elected both in the townships and in the rural districts to guarantee the interests of the population and its participation in the management of the affairs of local communities.

**ADDRESS DELIVERED BY FARHAT HACHED BE-  
FORE THE SECOND WORLD CONGRESS OF THE  
INTERNATIONAL CONFEDERATION OF FREE  
TRADE UNIONS, HELD AT MILAN, ITALY,  
JULY 4-12, 1951**

We are at present discussing a report on a subject which is of grave concern to all of us, namely the totalitarian menace and the means of overcoming it. This report refers to several forms of totalitarianism: Fascism, Nazism, Peronism, all of which spell, for the workers, the loss of their rights. To these well-known forms of totalitarianism, we must add Communist imperialism, a monolithic force bent on eradicating the rights of individuals as well as those of nations. A few previous speakers pointed out that these were not the only types of totalitarianism to which Congress should devote its attention, and I wish to thank them for having said that. Colonial and dependent nations, whether Asian or African, suffer from a different kind of domination and oppression: Colonialism, which is even more nefarious than the others since it is the most ignominious method of domination over individuals and nations.

Without wanting to prolong this discussion unnecessarily, I should like to make the comparison between the situation of countries under a totalitarian regime and that of countries still under the yoke of a colonial regime.

First of all, what is dictatorship? I shall define it as a form of domination by a single man or a single party, by a form of government or regime. In colonial countries, dictatorship is exercised through anonymous invisible, imperceptible agencies. Let us consider the case of Tunisia, which is very similar to that of all North African countries, and in particular to that of Morocco and Algeria. Tunisia is under a protectorate regime exercised by France. For us, nationals of a colonial country, France is not the France of 1789, it is not free and democratic France such as we see it when we go there, for the authority of France over its colonies is dishonoured by Frenchmen themselves. We have seen different regimes in France . . .

We are at present examining the various forms of totalitarian oppression and I am describing the particular type of

oppression under which we are suffering in Tunisia. In Tunisia, the situation has never changed, whether it was under the Third Republic, under the Government of Vichy, under the de Gaulle regime or the Fourth Republic. Through all these governments, we remained under a regime of colonial domination and oppression. I should like to stress the fact that all regimes of colonial oppression are characterized by the absence of voting rights because we have no democratic institutions. Peoples under colonial regimes are not allowed to vote; they are not allowed to elect their own representatives; they have no parliament; they have no local authorities of their own. Legislation is concocted in Government offices and imposed by force, purely and simply.

Recently, the General Union of Tunisian Workers (UGTT) took the initiative in launching a nation-wide campaign in favor of representation of the people and of constitutional guarantees. This campaign has the whole population behind it and has received the support of all democratic organizations. It is growing rapidly but, once again, it is being opposed by the Government of the Protectorate. We are not free to choose our own government. We must, on the contrary, accept without complaint any persons appointed to take over the administration of the country. We do not enjoy freedom of association. It is true that trade unions exist but this victory has been wrested from the Authorities at an enormous price and after many years of brutal repression. There is no freedom of the press. We have a number of newspapers, but those which dare to criticize the Government's policy are suspended by a decree of the Resident General. Human rights do not exist. Certain areas of our country are out of bounds for Tunisians. The right to strike has never been recognized. True, the workers have taken it and are using it; but strikes are quelled in bloodshed, in the name of freedom of labor. In Morocco, as we have already pointed out, there are no trade union rights. The delegation of the UGTT has taken the liberty of submitting a special motion, for we believe that Congress cannot tolerate the fact that in a country such as North Africa, so near to Europe and so advanced, trade union rights should be denied to workers who are perfectly ready for free trade unionism.

Before coming to this Congress, I had asked authorization to visit Morocco, with a view to helping our friends there to organize an independent Moroccan trade union, which would have affiliated to the ICFTU. Once again, it was the Moroccan Resident's Government which forbade me to enter the country. We have no freedom, no rights whatsoever. Yet the populations of North Africa took part in the wars against Nazism and Fascism. The first troops who set foot on German soil, at a



time when the armies of the Axis were still putting up stiff resistance against the Allied onslaught, were North Africans. Tunisians were among the troops which distinguished themselves most in the battle of Cassino. And now, after what is called victory over totalitarianism, those men have returned home to find the same policy of oppression and domination that they had been fighting.

That, dear Brothers, is what all delegates from free countries participating in a trade union Congress should know. Brother Potofsky made special reference, in the second part of his report, to the regimes of Franco and Peron. He proposes that we should deny them any help whatever so long as the Spanish and Argentinian people have not recovered their democratic rights and the exercise of their national sovereignty. This is a good proposal, and we shall support it. But the Congress must also consider the use made by certain so-called democratic countries of the economic assistance which they are receiving. For instance, is the economic help granted to France being used by that country for the purpose of raising the standard of living of the workers in French-occupied countries? Two days ago, a delegation raised the question of the Marshall Plan which, as we all know, is financed by our American friends. Has that delegation ever asked itself to what use these Marshall Plan funds are put? My answer to that question is that these funds are used to give added power to the forces which oppress the colonial and semi-colonial nations.

In our opinion, it is not sufficient to give these nations repeated assurances that their standard of living will be raised, simply in order to save them from the influence of the Communists. Our responsibility and our very "raison d'être" is to promote the adoption of progressive social legislation in all countries, so that our very presence would be sufficient to halt the progress of communism.

In conclusion, I should like to say that, as far as we are concerned, we refuse to believe that the world trade union movement, free and genuine as it is, should make a difference between these various forms of oppression and exploitation. We are convinced, on the other hand, that when this Congress is called upon to take a position with regard to the resolution we have submitted on this question, it will stress the importance which it attaches to the solution of the colonial problem, a survival of one of the most hateful forms of totalitarian domination.

**ADDRESS DELIVERED BY FARHAT HACHED BEFORE THE 70th ANNUAL CONVENTION OF THE A.F. of L., HELD IN SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA, SEPTEMBER 17-26, 1951**

It is with a deep and sincere feeling of happiness that I take my place on this trade union platform to address you and to convey to your convention the warm greetings of the workers of Tunisia and their national trade union organization, the General Union of Tunisian Workers (UGTT).

This is the first time in the history of the labor movement — in fact, the first time in history — that a representative of the North African trade unions has crossed the Atlantic Ocean to establish direct contact with the New World and to forge ties of friendship and solidarity between the workers of two continents.

We accepted your invitation because the Tunisian trade union movement wanted to express its deep interest in the establishment of close and lasting ties with the American trade union movement and in the tremendous importance of genuine cooperation between our two peoples for social progress and the development of democracy which is the safest guarantee of peace and freedom.

In coming here, we also wish to recall that the American people have, in the course of a quarter-century, on two occasions saved the world from militarist and totalitarian domination which threatened humanity as a whole. During the Second World War we witnessed the arrival on our own soil of American and Allied soldiers who chased the Nazis out of Africa, pursued them into their homeland and there destroyed them. May we also recall that Tunisia contributed its modest share to this gigantic and victorious undertaking among the many hundreds of thousands of brave North African soldiers who participated in the annihilation of the forces of aggression threatening to dominate the world and plunge humanity into barbarism.

Today, more than eight years after the defeat of the Fascist armies in Tunisia and more than six years after the end of the Second World War, the workers and the people of North Africa are still in search of their own liberation, for the fall of Nazism and Fascism has not brought for them the end of colonialism.

We are perfectly aware that the American people, profoundly imbued with the spirit of democracy which more than anything else constitutes their strength and fundamental unity, are today fighting on the international front against new obstacles which absorb your special attention and for which you make great sacrifices. We realize that these sacrifices will spare the world



a new catastrophe which would completely annihilate all civilization.

We believe it is our duty to call the attention, particularly of the American trade unions, and, especially, of the great American Federation of Labor, which has always shown an interest in the problems of dependent peoples, to the legitimate aspirations of the workers and peoples who do not to this day enjoy freedom nor the right to live under a democratic regime of their own choice. For these workers and these peoples — of whom we are a part — the struggle for freedom has never ceased. The fight is quite naturally directed against the colonial regime which rules us and which is meting out to us the worst treatment that a dictatorship has ever dared to impose upon mankind.

In spite of innumerable difficulties encountered in our unrelenting fight for social and national freedom, our working class and our people have wisely rejected Communist propaganda which in a demagogic way seeks to exploit the misery and legitimate discontent of the people for ends with which you are only too well acquainted. Our trade union movement therefore turned its back on the Cominform-dominated World Federation of Trade Unions and has joined up with the great organization of free world labor, the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions.

But we would be committing a serious error in believing that the danger of Communism has definitely been eliminated. We would not be telling the truth if we said that the masses of Tunisia, rallying to the Moslem faith as their only refuge, are therefore immune to all Communist infiltration.

The truth is rather that our trade union movement has taken its place in the national struggle for liberation, for democratic rights, for the respect of the rights of the individual, for the abolition of the methods of slavery and the end of all colonial domination, for the improvement of the living standards of the masses, for social progress. In other words, our movement, which works untiringly and specifically for the realization of the great principles of free trade unionism, embodies the hopes of the working class, inspires it with confidence in its own struggle and in its own victory, stimulates national unity, and holds out to the people the hope of the early fulfillment of their legitimate aspirations without the surrender of their philosophical and religious beliefs and without having to model their thoughts and opinions after a formula which Communism, bent on invasion and sometimes aggression, seeks to impose on the entire world.

Above all, we must avoid the disappointment which our people might feel if they were forced to abandon their belief that they can defeat colonialism without the Communists profit-

ing from such a victory. There is a danger that this lengthy and very costly struggle of our people, if not effectively supported by the democracies of the free world, will lead our country into a tense situation which will gravely menace peace in the strategic Mediterranean area. Such a situation would most certainly be fully exploited by the agents of the Cominform. It is because we know we can count on the powerful and dynamic working class of the United States playing an active part in the affairs of the world that we are anxious to tell you of our problems — which are also your problems.

The workers of the oppressed countries, frustrated in their daily lives, deprived of their human dignity and their national and democratic liberties, look to democratic America, to the powerful trade union movement and to the active solidarity of the workers of the United States for action in keeping with the policy and principles so forcefully and convincingly enunciated and reiterated. Certainly, the workers of Tunisia — like all workers engaged in a struggle — must first of all rely on their own strength. Amid incredibly difficult and dangerous conditions, free trade unionism has now become a well established force in Tunisia. It is progressing in spite of obstacles, bloody repression and restrictions of all kinds. Our fellow-trade unionists of America must know that their brethren in North Africa are continuously engaged in a struggle for social justice and that this day-to-day struggle is strengthening the democratic front all over the world.

Let us hope that the fraternal and close cooperation of our trade union movements will effectively aid in the development of free trade unionism on the great African continent whose people aspire to be recognized as free human beings. And let us further hope that our common efforts will succeed in safeguarding peace on the basis of prosperity, social justice and freedom.



## *Appeal to World's Conscience*

### THE GREAT TEST

*Mission, February 1, 1952*

When these lines are published, all Tunisia will be on strike again, united in a national movement which fights for the triumph of the aspirations of her people.

Two weeks have already passed since the masses were victimized by a policy of repression. In the course of these two weeks no effort was spared to drown the voice of the people — but in vain.

February 1, a day dedicated to Tunisia throughout the world and especially in many friendly countries, is above all a battle day of the Tunisian people who, conscious of their rights, do not capitulate to a policy of force.

Day after day, raids are carried out everywhere, designed to drain the country of its cadres and to hand over the leaderless masses to their oppressors.

But it has been shown, if that was still necessary, that the people are mature enough not to succumb despite the blood-letting. They know how to find within themselves new sources of strength in order to hold firmly to their positions until the end of the tempest.

The peaceful and hard-working people does not intend to give up its rights or to renounce its future. It knows that the ordeal will be harsh because colonialism, its adversary, is not apt to draw the necessary lessons from the recent past and the present.

But it is the conscience of the world, placed before Tunisian reality with all its revelations, that must undergo the great test. The nations that have banded together in order to maintain peace and defend the democratic rights of the people have to face their responsibilities.

French democratic public opinion was the first to react against the unjust colonial policy. All men of good will, all peoples inspired by the ideal of freedom and justice, have clearly indicated their complete disapproval of the regressive procedures with whose help a handful of profiteers are determined to maintain their control over an entire people.

French diplomacy has not made use of any of the opportunities offered for the direct settlement of the conflict.

The dispute has been officially submitted to the United Nations. It has the obligation to guarantee the Tunisian people

the full exercise of their right of self-determination in peace and security.

The entire Tunisian nation vigorously demands this right. For many years they have tried to secure it through persuasion, they have made great sacrifices in their struggle which, however, has always been peaceful. They are today compelled to bring this debate before the international tribunal in order to obtain the just solution for which they are waiting.

Thus, it is now the turn of world conscience, the guardian of human civilization, to speak. We expect that it will respect the Charter which it has given itself.

As far as we are concerned, we have decided to put an end to the slavery in which some want to keep us. No one who believes in democratic ideals and the principles of human rights, will blame us for having taken that decision. On the contrary.

We have no desire to browbeat anyone; we want only not to be browbeaten or hurt any longer.

We are firmly convinced that the outcome of the test which we will have to undergo will be the triumph of the cause of freedom. The world on the march towards progress cannot accept servitude.

May the United Nations fully appreciate the historical importance which all oppressed peoples will attach to their decision.

Then international conscience, too, will indeed emerge stronger from this great test!



